R Howard (Fr.)
fr. Earl of Carlisle

THE

STEP-MOTHER,

A TRAGEDY.

BY

THE EARL OF CARLISLE, K. G. &c.

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PREFACE.

WITHOUT preſuming to arraign the popular taſte on the ſubject of theatrical performances, or to hint any opinion of my own on the German Drama, (with which I profeſs to be but little acquainted,) I flatter myſelf, no candid Britiſh critic will be offended by the acknowledgment, that, in the conſtruction of the fable, or in the conduct of the following ſcenes, recourſe has not been had to recorded hiſtory, or to the invention of cotemporary writers. Their works, in this inſtance,

inſtance, have not been tranſlated, their ſtyle of colouring has not been copied, and their plots have been ſafe from violation.

THIS attempt, however feeble its execution, to recal the attention of the Public to our own reſources, inſtead of turning for ſupplies to foreign warehouſes of dramatic treaſure, may not be without its uſe, if it ſtimulate more active induſtry, and better ability, to aſcertain the fact, whether our own native mines of poetical riches have, in reality, been exhauſted; or whether they have not been capriciouſly neglected.

To thoſe who may poſsibly take exception at the adventurous introduction of ſupernatural agency, of beings, who, it may be ſaid, ſhould own no maſtery after that of our immortal Shakſpeare, I can only apologize by a fair confeſsion of the truth. It appeared to me, that a Tragedy formed upon the

the ſtrict dramatic model, and without any thing that might ſupply, in a certain degree, the abſence of accuſtomed noiſe, machinery, and ſplendid decoration, would, at this moment, want the power, even in much abler hands than mine, either to invite attention, or to detain curioſity. In a choice of difficulties, therefore, I have riſked the charge of preſumption, by again bringing forward thoſe aërial beings, whoſe powers, as deſcribed in the ſongs of the ancient northern nations, were firſt employed by our Bard; and I have endeavoured to avail myſelf of the variety and relief which their appearance may give to theſe ſcenes.

I AM perfectly aware of the forbearance, which I ought further to beſpeak, for the intruſion of characters approaching to the Comic. It is true, indeed, that the great Painters, in treating ſublime ſubjects, have pro-

produced, on canvas, objects nowiſe allied to thoſe ſubjects, and even of a much inferior deſcription. The practice was doubtleſs adopted, in order to familiarize the ſpectator's attention, and thus, by the attraction of cuſtomary views, however humble and domeſtic, to carry him forward to the great buſineſs of their pencils. In this honeſt artifice have the Painters allowably indulged. But when I reflect upon the ſentence of the maſter of dramatic criticiſm *, who, in rigorous diſregard of his own practice, has pronounced the Engliſh Tragi-Comedy to be "wholly Gothic," I have little hope of deriving any defence from the Siſter Art. It is ſafer, I believe, to ſolicit, at once, the reader's indulgence, and to remind him, that the characters in queſtion obtrude but ſeldom on the ſcene; and that

* Dryden.

thoſe

thoſe of the loweſt caſt might perhaps be expunged, without occaſioning any material chaſm, or even interruption, in the general compoſition.

DRAMATIS

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

COUNT CASIMIR.
FREDERICK.
ADOLPHUS.
HENRY, COUNT of BOSINIA.
PERES.
ABBOT.
FRANCIS.
GOTHERD.
SERVANTS of COUNT CASIMIR.

COUNTESS CASIMIR.
LOUISA.
ISABELLA.
The FATAL SISTERS of the NORTH.

SCENE—POLAND; chiefly in the Caſtle of COUNT CASIMIR.

PROLOGUE.

WHEN all the Fiends, that Hell before confin'd,
Burſting their chains had leagued againſt mankind;
From Gallia's cliffs their brands of vengeance toſt,
And, with proud vaunts, inſulted Albion's coaſt;
No wonder that our Muſe ſhould drop her lyre,
And, mute with fear, to hidden caves retire.
For ſhe had witneſs'd from her rocky ſtrand,
The deluge that o'erwhelm'd the neighbouring land;
Heard, from her heights, the atheiſt's horrid yell;
Seen, by foul murder, what ſad myriads fell;
The giant Anarch raiſe his creſt on high,
And rule, and order, in his frowns defy;
Heard him invite Britannia's ſons to ſhare
The impious triumphs of Rebellion's war:
Or bid them, trembling at his tyrant nod,
Cruſh their lov'd Monarch, and abjure their God.
No wonder then, to diſtant climes we turn'd,
And ſought that aid, which heretofore we ſpurn'd;
Open'd our ports to new poetic wares,
And, from ſtrange ſources, drew both ſmiles and tears.
But ſince a People's ſenſe has nobly ſhown,
How they might guard their rights, ſuſtain the Throne,
Avert the courſe of ſlaughter from their ſhores,
And ſhun that plague, which other realms devours;
In the returning ſunſhine of our day,
When brighter hopes about our boſom play;
Our Sovereign ſafe, (for Heaven itſelf has ſpread
No common ſhelter round his ſacred head;)
Unchanged our Laws, our Altars left to ſtand,
And Plenty ſmiling on a frighten'd land;

Then,

PROLOGUE.

Then, may we not invite the Muſe again,
To tread her ſtage, and reaſſume her reign?
To deal her riches from her own full ſtore,
And, on unborrow'd pinions, proudly ſoar?

THE STEP-MOTHER,

A TRAGEDY.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

A dreary Spot in a Foreſt, amidſt Rocks and Pine-trees, where the FATAL SISTERS are diſcovered.—The Caſtle of COUNT CASIMIR ſeen at a Diſtance.

CHORUS OF THE FATAL SISTERS.

SUMMON'D from the realms of air
To this ſpell-defended place;
Let us to man's devoted race
Thus eternal hatred ſwear.

FIRST SISTER.

Before our rites ſhall be begun,
Siſters, tell me what you've done.
Before, on man's devoted head,
We new-invented torments ſhed,
Torments he can never ſhun,
Siſters, tell me what you've done.

SECOND SISTER.

Did I do well to ſnatch
A pregnant ſnake, with threatening creſt,
Hiſſing o'er its venom'd neſt?
Where do you think I laid it down,
Its ſlimy eggs to hatch?

ALL THE SISTERS.

Where? O where?

SECOND SISTER.

In a Tyrant's ermin'd crown.—
O you had ſmil'd with me to have ſtood,
Arming with double ſtings the brood:
For, from theſe ſpring each ſick'ning care,
Cares that to mortals are not known,
Unleſs they fill a deſpot's throne.
From theſe each ill that ſhortens life,
Public troubles, private ſtrife;
Contempt from peace, from war deſpair,
Hatred of foes, of friends diſtruſt;
And thus I lay the proud in duſt.
Did I do well?

ALL THE SISTERS.

Well! O well!

THIRD SISTER.

I caught a mother ſtanding on a height,
Doting on her infant's charms;
Hid by our power from human ſight,
I pluck'd her darling from her arms.

She

She heard its cries, ſhe ſaw it ſink;
Then, ruſhing to the fatal brink,
She would have follow'd to the gulph below;
I held her back—thus perfect was her woe.
Did I do well?

ALL THE SISTERS.

Well! O well!

FOURTH SISTER.

In the battle's bloody ſtrife,
Thrice I drew the fatal knife,
Young Fred'rick's thread to have cut in twain,
And heap his corſe upon the ſlain;
But he's reſerv'd for greater woe;
So Hela bids, as well you know.
Did I do well?

ALL THE SISTERS.

Well! O well!

FIRST SISTER.

Now break we off, and let's diſperſe,
We've to prepare a funeral hearſe;
For, ere the Day his courſe ſhall run,
Much in yon caſtle's to be done.
Death's ſable Goddeſs meets us there:
Siſters, diſperſe, and plunge in air.

CHORUS OF ALL THE SISTERS AS THEY RISE.

Summon'd from the realms of air
To this ſpell-defended place;
Let us to man's devoted race,
Again, eternal hatred ſwear.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

A Wood.—The Morning breaking.—A violent Storm.

Enter FRANCIS *and* GOTHERD.

FRANCIS.

O Mercy, what a night! Surely the ſtorm
Don't mean to leave a ſtick in the foreſt
To make a bonfire for our glad return!

GOTHERD.

Now this comes of your night-work—travelling thus
In bold defiance of ſweet ſleep and nature.
Lord! Lord! to have left the Vicar's fire-ſide—

FRANCIS.

Aye, and his down-beds too—that vexes me
More than all the reſt.

GOTHERD.

What will a man do,
When, by an increas'd pulſe, he finds himſelf
Within

Within a few ſhort miles of his miſtreſs!
Now, I wiſh to heaven that our young maſter
Had been well married, and before he went
To theſe confounded wars; and then, perhaps,
His hurry would not have been ſo preſſing.

FRANCIS.

That's true, Gotherd; for, would you believe it?
I feel no more impatience—oh! no more
Than one of our tir'd mules, to fill again
The arms of my incomparable Dorcas.
'Fore death, I can't help thinking but the elements
Have hired her tongue to ſave themſelves the trouble
Of thundering.——
(*From within*)—Holla! where are you, knaves?

Enter FREDERICK—ADOLPHUS—PERES—*Attendants.*

FREDERICK.

Well, gentlemen, have you not found our horſes?

FRANCIS.

We have loſt ourſelves, and found nothing ſo good.

GOTHERD.

They cannot yet have reach'd the hill—our path
Brought us a nearer road.

FREDERICK.

Tell us, where are we?

GOTHERD.

If I miſtake not, but a ſhort diſtance
From my Lord your father's caſtle. Sure this
Muſt be the very ſpot where the boar kill'd
Your Honour's dog Blanch.

FREDERICK.

Why left we our horſes?

ADOLPHUS.

By thy advice—They fell at every ſtep.

FREDERICK.

I would the tempeſt, that ſeems to have flung
All things to the moon, had but made as free
With my advice—What can have become of
them?
Here the road's plain and ſmooth, and we could
make
Good expedition.

ADOLPHUS.

I don't much marvel,
To ſee thee fret and fume thus, when, perhaps,
A little league is between thee and heaven.
My Iſabella ought to take it ill,
That I'm not leaping like a goat, from crag
To crag, to break my neck, and ſhow my haſte too.
And yet, perchance, my love's as true as thine.

But

But there is ever ſomething ſo forbidding
In that dark witch the Counteſs, that, tho' love
Would puſh me on, yet her inveterate face
Bids me recoil. So, like a plane ſmoothing
A board, I only move backward and forward
Without advance.

FREDERICK.

My father's wife! conſider—

ADOLPHUS.

But not thy mother.—Hang her! She loves thee
As I love her—I never can approach her,
But, in a moment, ſomething that ſhe ſays
Or does, raiſes my bile, and, for a fortnight,
Spoils my digeſtion.

FREDERICK.

O my friend, be patient,
For my ſake, and my father's, I entreat you—
We have not long to ſuffer from her temper.
—The ſtorm, methinks, increaſes!

PERES.

There's a craſh!
That monarch oak fell as a king ſhould fall—
No mean ſurviver of his peoples' ruin!

FREDERICK.

Mercy, Doctor—to be moralizing
In a whirlwind!

PERES.

This ſtorm puts me in mind—
Juſt in ſo rude a night—of an occurrence
The moſt remarkable. I'll tell you all
The particulars——

FREDERICK.

Not for the world, Doctor!
Some other time—ſome other time.

PERES.

Well, well—
'Tis a ſad pity 'tis not ſomewhat lighter.
This muſt be a rare ſpot for botanizing.
I've heard, that the great Profeſſor Boreman—

FREDERICK.

He's off again—there is no end of this.
Peres, good night!—If you mean to ſleep here,
I'm not of your party.—Let's on, Adolphus.

[*Exeunt all, excepting Peres and Francis.*

PERES.

My good friend Francis, you perhaps would chooſe
To hear about Profeſſor Boreman? Truly,
'Tis a moſt ſad and intereſting ſtory.

FRANCIS.

O dear! not I, Sir.—Will you jog on, Doctor,
Or be frozen to death by yourſelf here?

Why,

Why, ſurely, the man's deaf!—What can you be
Thinking of?

PERES.

Why, I was thinking how old
Was the Profeſſor Boreman when——

FRANCIS.

O heavens!
This fool will loſe himſelf, and, what's much worſe,
Me too!—For God's ſake, Doctor, come away!
(*Puſhing him off.*) [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

The COUNTESS CASIMIR's Apartment.

COUNTESS. HENRY.

COUNTESS. (*reading a paper*)

'Tis well! exceeding well!—This his laſt will!
O what a web of poverty is ſpun
For me!—Thus, thus I am repaid for years
Of ſufferings!—How came you by this paper?

HENRY.

For ever watchful where your intereſts point,
Of late I've mark'd, ſkulking about the caſtle,
That human vampire, the attorney, Peter.
Unnotic'd,

Unnotic'd, I ſoon traced this ſubtle miſchief
Up to your huſband's cloſet, there took leave
To liſten, but to hear if aught was brewing
Injurious to a cauſe to me ſo dear.
Enough I gain'd to make me ſeize th' occaſion,
Afforded by the night, to ſearch his cabinet—
You know I am expert—and there I found
This plan of future ruin.

COUNTESS.

O how juſt!
He in his grave, and blaſting, by this act,
All the bright hopes on this ſide mine!—He leaves me
The ſcanty means of wearing out my years
In this deteſted land—The noble gift!
Furies and death! obſerve the diſpoſition—
Here to waſte half my life, and then to view
The termination of this lively proſpect
Cloſed in by beggary!

HENRY.

'Tis a foul wrong—
You, who, by ſplendid talents, firſt procur'd
Honours and wealth; gave to his laviſh hand
Extenſive territories; thus repairing
The gaping chaſms that wild extravagance
Had worn in all his tatter'd fortunes—truly
You are moſt injured!

COUNTESS.

COUNTESS.

Look but at theſe walls—
You can remember how I liv'd at Warſaw!
What fill'd my chambers there! What hourly crowds,
Wearing the pavements of my palace courts!
Croſiers, and Truncheons, glitt'ring Orders, bending
The marble ſtair-caſe! Merit and Diſgrace,
Ambition, Intereſt, Power—ſtruggling, all,
For the ſhort heaven of a toilet-whiſper!
Envoys and Miniſters from every ſtate
That had a name in the globe! Court-Inſects,
Opening their gawdy pinions as I ſmil'd,
Or to my frown yielding their flutt'ring lives!

HENRY.

Long on that glorious pinnacle, I view'd
Thee ſeated; (and knew the price you paid for it.) (*Aſide.*)

COUNTESS.

Behold me here, ſad partner of a bed,
Haunted by all the demons of Diſguſt,
Contempt, and Hate!—daily condemn'd to hear,
Not, what the rival Eagles of the North
Are rip'ning into form—not, if the Turk
Burſts his ſeraglio ſtupor—not, if Spain,
With France, is ſtealing, with inſidious ſtep,
On unſuſpecting Europe—nor, if England

Rears her proud Trident on her rocky cliffs,
And bids the univerſal world obey!
Inſtead of theſe,—the poacher's war, the intrigues
And plots of village againſt village; or
All th' edifying ſecrets of a convent;
Then, that eternal horrible detail
Of mountain-chaſes!—Was I made for this!

HENRY.

I own it is too much for human bearing.

COUNTESS.

And now that glow-worm Hope, that would ſometimes
Caſt its faint rays upon this horrid night,
And whiſper, that, when Riot and Debauchery
Had much advanc'd what Nature's common courſe
Had plac'd at no great diſtance, I ſhould then
Regain my loſt condition;—by this work—
This work of hell—this fatal inſtrument—
Is utterly deſtroyed—oh! dead, for ever!
What's to be done?

HENRY.

Suppoſe another deed,
Aping this villainy, but with th' inverſe
Of the accurs'd intention—it were eaſy
To make it take the place of this.

COUNTESS.

COUNTESS.

O ſtay!
Should he detect the forgery, we're loſt,
For ever loſt—What if he die inteſtate?

HENRY.

By Poland's law, then all you brought your Lord
Reverts to you again.

COUNTESS.

And ſay you ſo?
Henry,—he never makes another will.

HENRY.

Prithee, explain!

COUNTESS.

How dull! Thus, with its merits—
(Tearing the Will)
My huſband muſt not make another will!
But ſoft, we're interrupted!—Quick! be gone!
You know the private way. Be not ſeen here.

SCENE IV.

Enter LOUISA *and* ISABELLA.

COUNTESS.

O my young friends, how beauteous you appear,
When every riſing ſun adds but freſh fragrance
To my ſweet opening roſes! *(embracing them.)*

ISABELLA.

ISABELLA.

Here's flattery!
Her compliments are pioneers, but ſent
To cut a road before the approaching cenſure.
I tremble for the ſequel. (*aſide.*)

LOUISA.

O good Madam,
You are too partial. 'Tis this eaſy life,
This caſtle's wholeſome ſite, and—

COUNTESS.

Why avoid
Juſt commendation? Here you are matchleſs.
But don't miſtake me ſo, to think I mean,
Leaving this ſolitude, as leave you will,
And, much too ſoon for happineſs, engage
In the world's dang'rous paths, that you'll not meet
Faces as fair as yours, and graceful forms
Of moſt refined elegance, of which
You yet, indeed, have ſmall conception.

LOUISA.

Truly,
We do not doubt it.

ISABELLA.

Anſwer for yourſelf,
My meek Louiſa: I'll ſtay to be convinc'd.

COUNTESS.

COUNTESS.

'Tis there, my friends, I ſpeak it for your good,
(Not that I think the caſe will e'er be yours)
That many a huſband, ſome e'en of the beſt,
Break the ſlight chain that rural beauty twines.
You'll deem me too ſevere—but 'tis my love
Dictates this caution. (*embracing them again.*)

ISABELLA.

Here's our beauty gone!
Our huſbands falſe, too, and before we've got them! (*aſide.*)

COUNTESS.

This day, our letters teach, Lord Frederick comes,
Cover'd with well-earn'd laurels, to receive,
His deareſt recompenſe, Louiſa's hand.
What praiſe of ſpirit, modeſty, and ſkill,
Fill'd each diſpatch from our victorious army!

LOUISA.

I knew it would be ſo. Is there a virtue,
Truth, honour, firmneſs, that finds not ſhelter
In my lov'd Frederick's breaſt! beſides thoſe gentler
Feelings which real courage dares give way to,
When more ſuſpicious valour loudly boaſts,
It ſheds no tears of weakneſs.

COUNTESS.

COUNTESS.

You but ſpeak
All that I think, nay, know of his perfections:
And tho' I own his excellence beyond
All general rule, that your young ſoldiers prove
But faithleſs mates, not quitting their wild pranks;
Yet, to enſure your comfort, I had wiſh'd
He'd taken another walk of life, not riſking
His conſtancy with wiles of various countries
And of climes, But you ſeem unwell.

LOUISA.

Indeed,
I did not look for being vexed to-day—
To-day, that brings my Frederick to us all.

COUNTESS.

You much miſtake me—'twas my tender care
That warn'd you of a ſtorm that might ariſe,
And ſpoil the ſurface of a ſummer's ſea,
On which your novice bark glides unprepar'd
For change of ſeaſons. But now I leave you—
The hour arrives, when, with my vows to heaven,
I ſcatter o'er the neighbouring village poor
That charitable aid, than which God's altars
Receive not ſweeter incenſe. All the Saints
Have you in their good keeping.

(Embracing them.)

[*Exit Counteſs.*

ISABELLA.

ISABELLA.

There ſhe goes,
To make e'en charity itſelf diſguſting!
Her charity's too like our litter mules
That ſound their bells along the public way,
To attract the notice of the gaping hamlet:
While thine, with dove-like flight, ſkims o'er each cottage
On noiſeleſs wing, and, thro'each crevice, dropping
In ſecret its ſweet balm.—But, dear Louiſa,
Let not her malice grieve you. Your Frederick
This day returns: our odious narrow cage
Will ſoon fly open; we no more the ſport
Of that ſtrange woman's humour!

LOUISA.

Iſabella,
We muſt not, cannot part! Your lov'd Adolphus
Is not foreſworn; and ſure one houſe may ſtretch
Its walls to hold four friends like us.

ISABELLA.

Be that
As Heaven ordains! and ſhould he prove untrue,
I'll bear it as I may; and from thy friendſhip
Taſte as much bliſs as love may have to give me.
No, no! we will not part. I can be uſeful;
Attend thee like a nurſe, when Frederick's duty
Shall tear him from thy arms; then conjure down
Ill-founded fears; foretel the hour, the minute,

Of his return; ſcold thee, or laugh thee out of
The viſionary wounds thy love provides him.
I may inſtruct thy children; and each day
Light in their little hearts the noble flame
Of emulating thee. So, ſweeteſt friend,
If I'm condemn'd to twine the willow-garland,
I am not without reſources.

LOUISA.

Iſabella,
Without thy chearful aid, your poor Louiſa
Shrinks like the tendereſt flower at ev'ry wind;
And, even now, I have a puzzled ſenſe
Of coming evils—oh! too much like that
Which a ſick, feeble, mem'ry loves to hang on,
Struggling to recall paſt woe. Come, then, laugh,
Or ſcold me, as you will, for this ſad weakneſs.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.

A Hall in CASIMIR's Caſtle.

Servants meeting GOTHERD *and* FRANCIS.

FIRST SERVANT.

Welcome, Gotherd! welcome, Frank!—Where left ye
Our dear young maſter? O, how is his wound?
Is he lame? Does he halt?—God bleſs him, tho'
He come on crutches!

GOTHERD.

Had I, my good friends,
A thouſand voices, I would anſwer you
While he alights from horſeback. Come, diſpatch;
Acquaint Lord Caſimir we're all arriv'd;
And be ſure you ſay *all*. He muſt have been
In a ſad alarm, leſt ſome of our heads
Had been left grinning o'er a Turkiſh gate-way.

SERVANT.

If you're for grinning, you might as well have taken
That Eaſtern mode as any you'll find here:

For, to tell you a great ſecret, we've forgot
All of us how to grin. There's Madam Counteſs
Cannot away with mirth; wit's contraband;
We dare not ſmuggle it with our gin and brandy;
And ſo we all get drunk in ſober ſadneſs.

FRANCIS.

Alas! alas! that's much—but times will change:
Theſe things muſt be alter'd. How's the vintage?
Cellars well ſtock'd?—Tho', as the poets ſay,
We ſoldiers love the roaring of great guns,
The neighing of war-horſes, and of matrons
Violated, and all ſuch martial noiſes;
Yet I can ſo accommodate my ſenſes,
That, in the drawing of a cork, I find
A very comely ſound. What ſay you, lads?

Enter other Servants.

SERVANT.

As I live, they're all met on the hall-ſteps:
They're now hard at it, pulling, kneeling, kiſſing,
Queſtioning, anſwering; and the old houſe-dog
Knows our young Lord, and ſeems more glad than any,
Saving our ſweet young lady.—Here they come!

SCENE II.

Enter CASIMIR, FREDERICK, ADOLPHUS, PERES, COUNTESS CASIMIR, LOUISA, ISABELLA, *Attendants.*

CASIMIR.

You've made good haſte. I was afraid the letter,
That muſt have reach'd you, as you paſs'd thro' Warſaw,
Might, for ſome days, have given you employment
With our firſt Miniſter.

FREDERICK.

He was then abſent,
And his arrival for this month poſtpon'd.
I deem'd it not your pleaſure, I had waited.

CASIMIR. (*aſide*)

O that you had! thus I had gain'd ſome days
Of value beyond meaſure.

LOUISA.

But this wound!
You hardly mention'd it! then the fatigue,
The weather, and the roads; alas! you ſhould
Have travell'd ſlower.

PERES.

Soft.—As for the wound,
I beſt can ſpeak to that: I can deſcribe

Moſt accurately the nature of the hurt.
But firſt, young lady, you muſt learn the courſe
That a ball took in Marſhal Mouſkin's hip;
Almoſt a homogeneous caſe, except
With the nice difference of the injury
To the os pubis, and the great trochanter—

FREDERICK.

O this abuſes all indulgence! Peace,
As you reſpect clean ſtraw and hellebore.
The man is ſurely craz'd! Is this a ſeaſon—

CASIMIR.

If you would hear of wounds, of perilous chances,
Of valour and of ſtrength, of men whoſe ſinews
Were twiſted, like a cable, by the hand
Of Nature, and form'd by her to bend not
Under ſuch iron coats as now would cruſh
To atoms all the modern pigmy race,
You muſt look back to ſeaſons, when our Poles
Had men to ſtruggle with!
Sons of our northern Serpent, Swedes and Ruſſians,
Another race! How different from your Turk,
Reeling and nerveleſs from his haram-conflicts,
Ill-ſtomaching the change of the down ſopha
And ſcented bath, for the ſtraw-litter'd tent!
And ſtill you call yours—War!

ADOLPHUS.

You much miſtake,
My Lord; granting, that, ſince your famous times,

The human race has undergone a ſweating,
As has our coin, and now has little value;
Yet, had you witneſs'd—

FREDERICK.

O no more of this!
Indulge his humour.

ADOLPHUS.

'Tis a curſed one:—
But, for thy ſake—

COUNTESS.

We're wont to hear, all things,
In his conceit, are verging to decay.
The very ice is not with equal thickneſs
Ribb'd, as in his good days: the ſun itſelf
Now yields, in potency of heat and ſplendour,
To the poor peaſant's ſtove. Excuſe this fancy;
I know he means you no ungracious welcome.

ADOLPHUS. (*aſide*)

As hearty as your own, or I'm miſtaken.

CASIMIR.

Come, let us leave this place. Our northern air
Muſt needs affront the untun'd, out-ſtretch'd nerves
By Aſia's ſteaming winds. Prithee, let's in.
I know your modern traveller wants recruits
That nature formerly could well diſpenſe with.

[*Exeunt, excepting Adolphus and Iſabella.*

SCENE III.

ADOLPHUS *and* ISABELLA.

ADOLPHUS.

One word, for mercy, deareſt Iſabella!

ISABELLA.

Be quick—I tarry but a moment: uſe it
With your old frankneſs; and tell me fairly,
Without a prologue of eſteem and friendſhip,
And ſuch moſt wintry terms, that you adore me—
O more than all our lovely ſex beſides,
One, only one, excepted!—Is't not ſo?

ADOLPHUS.

O no, my charming miſtreſs! Do but hear me.
I now can tell you, that the heart, which ſwell'd
With bittereſt anguiſh, when firſt torn from thee,
Returns to be reſtor'd to happineſs
By all my ſoul holds dear.

ISABELLA.

All this is fine,
O very fine to hear! But yet, methinks,
You might as well have made me gueſs your meaning
A little ſooner.

ADOLPHUS.

I confeſs a weakneſs;
But, while the Counteſs' preſent, nor my thoughts,
Nor

Nor are my words my own. I feel quite loſt
In that dark maze, whoſe windings I purſue,
Without a thread to catch her ſecret meanings.
Forgive me, Iſabella; I'm aſham'd,
In ſuch a fruitleſs inqueſt to be occupied,
Why am I a ſlave to this antipathy?

ISABELLA.

To feel it for a toad or ſpider—creatures
That, for the humble place where Nature's plac'd
them,
Beſpeak our pity, rather than our hate—
Is moſt prepoſterous! But for that woman,
Heaven gives us hate, for inſtinct, to avoid her.
I feel, before I ſee her, like the bird
That, trembling at the riſing ſtorm, would fain
Houſe any where to ſhun its diſtant fury.

ADOLPHUS.

Then I am not ſo ſingular in this—

ISABELLA.

I and my dear Louiſa, in your abſence,
Have vegetated here; if ſometimes warm'd
By the falſe heat of her officious kindneſs,
Yet quickly to be crush'd, like hateful weeds
That curſe the paſture. Wanting other food
To ſatiate her intriguing appetites,
She ſeeks dominion o'er each neighb'ring caſtle;
And, with her Warſaw maxim, to divide
And rule, ſpreads every where domeſtic jars;

In

In the calm boſom of each peaceful family
Lights the curſt torch of diſcord.—Now no more:
We are here alone; we ſoon may be enquir'd for.
Our conference will excite her jealouſy,
And we ſhall feel her vengeance.—Follow me.
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.

A long Gallery in CASIMIR's Caſtle.

CASIMIR. (*ſolus*)

To turn to death for aid, rather than wait
Age or diſeaſe's courſe; and any where
To fix the point of fortune's compaſs, rather
Than watch, with throbbing breaſt, and ſtraining eyes,
The irritating tremblings of its needle,
(Tho' hope ſhould ſink for ever) is far happier
Than on ſuch waves of doubt to toſs! The child
Who, with his irreſolute foot, firſt touches
The chilling ripplings of the ſtream, ſuddenly
Calls up a ſoul, and plunges in. Shall man,
Proud man, ſtand undecided on the bank?
Forbid it, courage!—Ere the ſun decline,
I muſt reſign for ever young Louiſa,
Or make her mine—mine ſhe ſhall be!—Be ſtill,
Compunction's cozening voice!—Is it for me,
With all a mountain's weight of ſins upon me,

To

To ſhrink before this ant-hill of offence!
Mine ſhe muſt be—But how?—O by what means?

FIRST SISTER *entering from the Bottom of the Stage.*

FIRST SISTER.

By prompt deciſion.

CASIMIR.

What do I behold!
A female form! Could a ſubſtantial being,
Encumber'd with our clay, glide thro' the crevice
Of this thick maſonry? for, from that quarter,
No mortal can approach!

FIRST SISTER.

That I do hold
The maſter-key of all your ſecret purpoſes,
And have in ſolemn keep the viſitation
Of your heart's inmoſt cell, will by yourſelf
Be freely own'd.—Liſten! to me is known
The very hour when, firſt, Senſe, Reaſon, Prudence,
Impell'd by Love's hot breath, mounted the air,
And, like the ſilky goſſamer, appear'd
No more.—Was not the Turkiſh war a ſcheme
To profit of your ſon's and rival's abſence?
And he returns too ſoon—Is it not ſo?

CASIMIR.

How would'ſt thou be anſwer'd? but that, in hell,
Thou haſt ſeen blazon'd all my deep intents!

No

No tenant of our planet has acceſs
To what lies darkly buried in this boſom.

FIRST SISTER.

Enquire not what I am. If a thin ſpirit,
Permitted here to take my fancy's range;
Or, if theſe marble walls expand and cloſe,
As I do bid them, from a magic power;
Or if, without ſuch ſupernatural aid,
I have contriv'd to break upon your privacy;
Still view me your protecting Genius. Long,
Long I've watch'd thy bolder walk thro' life,
And ſeen thee ſnap the chains which others bind;
Bound o'er the loftieſt fence, to win the joys
That heaven has made for man; nor turn aſide
To ſhun the nothings of a monkiſh cenſure.
Does it become thee, Caſimir, now to pauſe,
And not purſue the nobleſt, eaſieſt prey!

CASIMIR.

Say'ſt thou—Louiſa eaſy to be won!
Whene'er I venture to approach, her innocence
Ruins my utt'rance. Tho', in thy ſtrange preſence,
I own I ſtand not inacceſſible
To an unuſual awe; yet ſomething ſtill
Of Caſimir remains.—Fore her, he's fled,
And coward dotage takes the ſhape he leaves!

FIRST

FIRST SISTER.

O theſe are love-ſick ſcruples, idle qualms.
Are there no other means to gain on beauty
But diſtant ſighs and tears; loſing this hour,
And thinking that to-morrow will expreſsly
Riſe more propitious for the ſoft diſcloſure?
Away! away, Lord Caſimir! This want
Of enterprizing fire renders my aid
Of no avail. Let, then, the glorious harveſt
Of ſweet Louiſa's charms be borne away
To fill another's garner, while Caſimir
Dares not diſpute the prize within his reach.

CASIMIR.

Within my reach! Will youth and beauty turn,
When Saturn wooes, from a young Phœbus' prayer?

FIRST SISTER.

But, ſtrength and power would ſeize the deſtin'd
prey,
And leave a novice boy to whine his loſs.
'Tis force muſt make her your's—

CASIMIR.

Ah! what ſay'ſt thou?
Force! And what hope from that?

FIRST SISTER.

We know, all women
Do not abhor their raviſhers. Is not

The

The neighb'ring country thine? Madneſs dares not
Oppoſe a Poliſh mandate.

(*While Caſimir is plunged in thought, the Firſt Siſter retires by the way ſhe entered.*)

CASIMIR. (*not perceiving that ſhe is gone*)
But what if I attempt? By heaven, ſhe's fled!
And by the road ſhe ſeem'd at firſt to enter!
She this way paſs'd not by. The known entrance
Is here, and only here. Perhaps I've been
Converſing with ſome damned ſoul, that buys
An abſence from its pris'n-houſe, on the bond
Of bringing others to its fiery manſion,
And I muſt be the pledge! Yet to reſign her,
To give her up, to hear no more her voice!
Never again to view thoſe beaming eyes
Chaſe, like another ſun, the night that hangs
On war-worn towers like theſe! nor Nature watch
At her beſt, proudeſt work, ſwelling each charm,
Till healthful, full-blown youth expand further!
To have that beauteous idol far remov'd,
That, while I gaz'd and worſhipp'd, made me bear
With unmov'd ſoul, and inattentive ear,
The conſtant din of keen connubial rancour!
How to recede!—The Indian, on the brink
Of the immenſe Canadian cataracts,
Could eaſier ſtem thoſe waters, and return,
Than

Than I can travel back. Inhabitant
Of this or other worlds, thou art obey'd!

[*Exit.*

SCENE V.

ADOLPHUS. PERES.

ADOLPHUS.

Peres, well met! How like you your abode?

PERES.

It ſpeaks magnificence and ſtrength. The mead,
That ſpreads its velvet level far below,
I do conjecture teams with many a plant
Moſt welcome to a ſtranger's eye; beſides,
Yon mountains doubtleſs are poſſeſs'd of ſtores
Of mineral treaſures, hidden yet from man.

ADOLPHUS.

I'm ſpeaking of the caſtle—the poſſeſſors:
What think you of our noble hoſts?

PERES.

Moſt luckily,
I am read in phyſiognomy: a ſcience
Well worthy cultivation; which protects us
From many a miſchief and diſgrace, that flow
From too much confidence in words and actions.
Steering by this, in ſilence, I avoid
The rocks that others ſplit on in their courſe.

ADOLPHUS.

If you're ſo wiſe, I would be fain inform'd
What you pronounce of the Lord Caſimir?

PERES.

Judging like vulgar men, I ſhould decide,
He was imperious, proud, cruel in nature,
Prompt to offend, implacable in anger—
Would govern all things with a maſter's rule,
Except his paſſions.

ADOLPHUS. (*aſide*)

Well, he's hit the mark!
And could not have ſaid better, had he liv'd
Whole years beneath this roof.

PERES.

But, by my art
And nearer inqueſt, in his nether lip
I do perceive benevolence. His noſtrils
Do not expand with a contemptuous ſnort
Of proud diſdain, but with a lively breathing,
Impell'd by love of all the human race.
His eyes, to ſome may flaſh with ſparks of rage;
Not ſo to me. Their fury is directed
But to the foes of virtue. Thus I learn,
And do aver, he is a worthy gentleman.

ADOLPHUS.

A famous end haſt thou, in truth, made of it,

And

And to a fair commencement: Now, Doctor,
Show equal knowledge of his better half.

PERES.

That is an eaſy taſk; for here no art
Spreads its thin lawn o'er the ſmall ſpecks and foibles
Moſt are conſtrain'd to hide; much leſs is wanted
The thicker veil to caſt o'er groſſer ſtains.

ADOLPHUS.

O Lord! O Lord!—The penetrating ſkill—

PERES.

A novice in our ſcience would diſcover,
In the convexity of the forehead,
A ſtore-houſe of deep thought; but that thought given
To things of heavenly kind, to lovely charity,
To acts of pure religion. The noſe might lead
To an ill-founded fear, that ſtiff diſdain
And vain conceit ſat on its riſing arch;
But then the ſweet formation of the mouth
Proves, nought but meekneſs, gentleneſs, and truth,
Harbour in her fair boſom.—Then her ear:
Mark'd you the tip of her left ear?

ADOLPHUS.

Enough,
Enough!—You clearly ſhow, beyond diſpute,
The excellence of your art.

PERES.

Truly, I knew
I ſhould convince you.

ADOLPHUS.

Well, well—I'll be your pupil.
In the mean time we will go in to dinner.

[*Exeunt,*

ACT

ACT III.

SCENE I.

The COUNTESS's Apartment.

COUNTESS. (*alone*)

Had he but caſt into my drinking-cup
The deadly nightſhade—had he but let out,
With his avenging ſword, my heart's warm blood,
And ſo at once had cruſh'd his enemy—
Might well, when nature pleaded for itſelf,
Admit of pardon. But, rotting in the tomb,
And, when the glorious ſenſe of great revenge
Was felt no more—to rob me from the grave—
To ſubject me to pain—'midſt provinces,
Abundant farms, and populous cities,
All which I gave, to make me crouch in the hut
Of beggary, a mendicant's aſylum—
And, when his ſhrouded eyes no more could feaſt
With execrable joy on the oppreſſion,
Still to oppreſs—O this diſſolves all ties!
Makes vengeance righteous!——Now, Lord Caſimir,
It is become a ſtriving race between us:
One only can enjoy the prize; that prize
Being life; and death muſt have a victim!

Enter LORD HENRY.

COUNTESS.

Welcome, Lord Henry! Since the freſh coming
Of our new gueſts, ſay, what has thy keen ſearch
Collected for our uſe? Know, circumſtances,
That ſingle trifling ſeem, together heap'd,
Become a maſs for notice.

HENRY.

In that ſpot,
Where we all met this morning, you'll believe
The obſerver little glean'd.—O 'twas a ſcene
To raiſe one's mirth!—Mark'd you your huſband's joy?
How real, how ſincere! All the haſty queſtions,
That ſav'd the anſwerer's breath? Can you divine,
Why Frederick's preſence could be well diſpens'd with?

COUNTESS.

The parent's hate of every thing allied
To virtue or fair conduct, conjures up
A ſtern upbraider of his life, in all
Who wallow not in his polluted litter:
And in this ſon he views a cenſurer
Of all his actions. Where is then the wonder
His abſence had been pardon'd?

HENRY.

Something yet
Remains to be explain'd. Late, I've remark'd
The various altars, which your Lord had rais'd
Around this place to wild unlicens'd love,
All have been neglected—No preſents now,
In ſecret are diſpatch'd, as formerly,
Each morning to the city. What's more—ſafely,
The village beauty meets him in her path;
Nor has ſome nine months after to deplore,
She took that dang'rous road. This ſudden change
I've well obſerv'd. Say, have you not ſuſpected
Some new attraction draws him from his haunts?

COUNTESS.

If I eſteem'd him, then perchance I could
Be jealous for his honour, and be ſtudious
To hide ſuch brutiſh weakneſs from the world:
Or if the trembling flame of fooliſh fondneſs
Still warm'd this injur'd heart—O then, indeed,
I might employ a leiſure hour to note
The fleeting, quick ſucceſſion of my rivals!
Where no affection warms the lifeleſs ſoil,
How can the roots of jealouſy be cheriſh'd?

HENRY.

If in the courſe he ſteers ſhould be conceal'd
Whirlpools and rocks, and dangers big with death,

Should *we* the Pharos light, and from the ſhore
Direct him ſafe, nor feaſt our eager view
Upon his certain ruin, while we ſtand
Safe and unſuſpected?—What if he caſt
His gloating eyes on young Louiſa's charms,
To tear her from his ſon's and rival's boſom!
When once love's fire is kindled in his veins,
We know the ravage that it makes.—Obſerve,
To what this leads.

COUNTESS.

I can imagine peril,
The vengeance of her kindred—proud and powerful—
Bloodſhed, and death, to follow in the train
Of ſuch outrageous acts! Yet theſe may be
Far at a diſtance plac'd—He may eſcape—
What then becomes of us? Beſides, how know you,
That he conceives a project ſo atrocious?

HENRY.

Soon as the return of Frederick was announc'd,
He could contain no longer; an hour ſince,
Of all the caſkets to repoſe the treaſure
Of his oppreſſive ſecrets, choſe my boſom.
You may be certain, that I urged not aught
To bend him from his purpoſe, when th' attempt
Might quickly draw on an event, in which
All your fall'n hopes would riſe again from darkneſs.

COUNTESS.

COUNTESS.

I have not now the time, to weigh the advantage
All this may offer—and yet 'tis a tree,
On which may ripen moſt important fruit,
Tho' now 'tis but in bloſſom. O reflect,
How ev'ry moment crumbles off a fragment
From the thin edge we ſtand on! If he find
We have purloin'd the paper—

HENRY.

Well I know,
Our lives muſt anſwer it.

COUNTESS.

O Lord Henry!
The time *has been*, when thy intrepid ſoul,
Thy executing hand—Is there no way,
To ſhun our danger?

HENRY.

Ah! how wild that look!
How thy breaſt labours with ſome dreadful project!
What would'ſt thou have me do?

COUNTESS.

Haſt thou forgot
Henriques? Fear we now, the indiſcretion
Of *his* incautious tongue? Did we much err,
When we agreed, the dark cemented tomb
Was fitter to entruſt with certain ſecrets,

Than that light babler's breaſt? Alas, for ſhame!
Why, at that name, does ſuch a creamy paleneſs
Chaſe from thy manly cheek its better hue?

HENRY. *(turning aſide)*

I would not underſtand you.

COUNTESS.

Come, Lord Henry,
Affect not dulneſs thus! What would'ſt thou do,
Wert thou to find another on a plank,
And the wide ocean ready to receive thee?
Would'ſt thou not ſeize the place, where only one
Could ride in ſafety, and diſlodge the wretch,
Hadſt thou the power? And does Lord Caſimir
Deſerve that we ſhould ſink for him?—for him
Who works our ruin?—when the ſlighteſt puſh
Conveys us into ſafety? What, reſign
For him, wealth, honour, pleaſures, life itſelf!—
By whoſe hand fell Henriques?

HENRY.

O, by mine!
By mine!

COUNTESS.

And, if by thine, has coward Nature
Howl'd, from her frighten'd caverns, condemnation
Of that ſurprizing deed? How many thouſands
Are daily from life's muſter-roll ſtruck off,
To

To fix ſome baſe uſurper on a throne?
Our ſacrifice was one—one for our ſafety:
War ſweeps its millions to ſecure a tyrant,
Or prop a falling miniſter!—The ſun
Riſes to my perception as he did
In wonted majeſty—the ſable night,
In cold indifference to our ſimple act,
Flings the ſame cloak about her. I have heard,
Of no convulſive heavings of the tomb,
To ſet its tenant free, and ſcare our ſlumbers.

HENRY.

Thy reſt, then, has been tranquil? calm thy nights
And days?

COUNTESS.

What ſhould diſturb them?

HENRY.

The pale form,
That's never abſent from theſe tortur'd eyes.

COUNTESS.

O childiſh viſion!—And you view this ſpectre?

HENRY.

Oh! I have ſeen it take all ſhape and ſize!—
Sometimes, as it did fill the mortal caſe
That nature gave to it—Anon, 'twould dwindle
Into ſo ſmall a ſpeck, that I have marvell'd
How, with my eyes, I have purſu'd its changes!
And yet, in that apalling miniature,
Moſt horribly diſtinct!—Lady, have done

With

With blood!—Again; it was but yeſterday,
As I do live, it met me like a giant,
Striding the valley's ſpace!—'Twas outline all,
For ſubſtance it had none: thro' its grey film,
I view'd the diſtant proſpect; yet there was
One ſpot opake—one ſpot that ſadly mark'd
Where once a noble heart had beat—but now,
Wither'd and gone! In that dark bed of gore,
You might have found the dagger that you lent me.
Lady, no more of blood!—no more of blood!

COUNTESS.

Aſide. O!—to have truſted to this baby man——
Henriques knew too much, and therefore died!
This ſlave is deeper taught, and, from his bed,
Still hopes to be diſmiſs'd into his grave
Secure, tho' well he knows this daring hand.
But I, a propheteſs of certain ſkill,
Tell him his days are number'd—
I was thinking,
My good Lord Henry, of all you have urg'd,
And, in my own ſad boſom, find the ſeeds
Of ſtrong compunction. Oh! you have cleft my heart,
Struck your keen arrow in the deſtin'd mark,
And touch'd a fiery nerve that ſtings my brain
With agony!—We'll turn to milder courſes;
Depend upon it, we will; and, when we dare,
We'll ſue to heaven for mercy!

[*Exit Counteſs.*

SCENE

SCENE II.

HENRY.

I like not this quick turning.—Souls, like her's,
That have ſo long been plung'd in the murky night
Of barbarous crime, endure not, on the ſudden,
The dazzling rays of virtue, but muſt paſs
Thro' purifying ſtages of repentance,
The tardy-pac'd gradations of contrition,
Before, towards the glorious luminary,
They venture to look up. Alas! this truth
I feel too deeply!

SCENE III.

Enter ABBOT *and Attendants.*

ABBOT.

Peace to theſe ancient walls!
Sweet peace to all beneath this ample roof,
Proſperity, and happineſs!

HENRY.

Welcome,
Good father!—Many a long day has paſs'd,
Since, laſt, you grac'd this manſion.

ABBOT.

My abſence
I had not deem'd obſerved—Age, and my duties,
Confine

Confine me to a narrow ſpace. Beſides,
Here, the diviſions of the day and night
Ill ſuit the faſhions of our formal houſe.
When I am watching, in the freſhen'd air,
The ſplendid riſe of day; the renew'd taper,
For the continued revel, cheats my ſenſe;
I view a double morning.—O, believe me,
I'm better at a diſtance—Own with me,
Things which I cannot mend, I muſt not witneſs.
I mean you no offence. Old age is ſtubborn.
This day, I learn, returns my deareſt Frederick,
My pupil, and my pride. Once more again,
I'd claſp him in theſe arms.—Is he arriv'd?

HENRY.

A few hours ſince he gladden'd this abode;
And, if I know him, will not be found tardy
To prove he's mindful of your tender care,
Nor wanting, for your ſage inſtruction, gratitude.

ABBOT.

I labour'd hard, and have reap'd golden fruit.
Men of the world may think the baſis weak,
On which I rais'd in him the ſuperſtructure
Of ſcholar and of gentleman. Know, then,
It was Religion; and, without a bluſh,
I here confeſs it—deem'd it ſuch a rock,
As would defy unſhaken all aſſailants;
Not only proof 'gainſt the light ſcoffing gales
Of modern pert philoſophy, but a match
For all the deeper howlings and foul noiſes,
That,

That, from the unbeliever's portico,
Ruſh on the aſtoniſh'd world.
Such were the ſtones I laid—a foundation,
For gen'rous conduct and for liberal learning
To take their ſpring from; and, high Heaven be prais'd,
Hopes of a ſanguine mind have not been blaſted!
Himſelf has added to the unfiniſh'd work
A well-wrought pinnacle of martial glory.

HENRY.

O good Lord Abbot!—if you love young Frederick——

ABBOT.

If!—do I exiſt?—Thou know'ſt I love him,
And with paternal fondneſs.

HENRY.

You are appriz'd,
Ere long he weds the beautiful Louiſa?

ABBOT.

A jewel for a prince's diadem!
How much a nobler portion in her virtue
And bluſhing modeſty, than all ſhe bears
Of her extenſive fortunes!

HENRY.

O! if you'd be
His guardian angel, ſnatch him quick from ruin;
Purſue him till he yields to your entreaties—
Haſtening

Haſtening the nuptial rites—to bear away,
From this infected air, his lovely treaſure!

ABBOT.

You ſpeak in riddles. Why this haſte?—this caution?

HENRY.

I can explain no further—Remember,
To-morrow ſhould not break, and find him here.
[*Exit Henry.*

ABBOT.

I know this man, and never could approve him.
Baniſh'd to this retreat, ſtill he practiſes
His former rules of cunning and deſign;
Leſt, when returning to the world, he ſhould
Have the firſt elements of artifice
To ſtudy o'er again.—But he was mov'd;
Nay, and the intruder Honeſty ſeem'd buſtling
In its new lodgings, an old courtier's boſom.
But here's my boy!

Enter FREDERICK.

FREDERICK. (*kneeling*)

Your bleſſing, honour'd father.

ABBOT.

That to this hour I've liv'd! that I behold thee!
Thus preſs thee to this boſom! I feel grateful
To him to whom all gratitude is due!
O tell me—it will pleaſe me—had I died
During thy abſence, and chance had led thee
Where

Where thy old maſter ſlept, thou would'ſt not, Frederick,
Have paſs'd his grave without a moment's pauſe,
The pauſe of dear affection—nature's pauſe—
Time for the heart to heave, and ſink again?
This is not wholeſome talk. I need not weep;
Tho' I'm fatigued; and my weak, trembling flame
Can only burn where all is huſh'd and quiet.
Sorrow and joy are both for me too mighty:
I'm chaff before ſuch whirlwinds.—I pray you,
Lead me to that ſeat.

FREDERICK.

O, you want the balm,
The cordial of your friend's officious care;
Theſe will preſerve you for us. My Louiſa
Shall fling into your cup the ſoft ingredients
Of never-ceaſing kindneſs; and with prayers,
That muſt reach heaven, you'll repay her love.

Enter LOUISA.—*Kneels to the* ABBOT.

ABBOT.

Riſe, my child. In theſe few words, accept
Th' extent of all my vows—May'ſt thou, in ſoul,
Continue thus of ſaint-like purity,
For that will flouriſh when thoſe roſes fade;
And time, that muſt not even ſpare thoſe charms,
Will ſteal them unperceiv'd away, if that
Retain its ermine whiteneſs.—Tho' I'm not

Often here found, yet I remark thy ſteps,
And watch thy cherub flight. Is there a cheek,
Late pale with grief, that glows again with crimſon—
Is there a hovel, where late ſqualid poverty
Lay rolling in the ſtraw of loathſome ſickneſs,
That ſmiles again in health and comfort? Turn
Where'er I will, thy care, thy generous care,
I find, has been before me! If I viſit
The debtor's ſad abode, thy hand, unſeen,
Has paid his hard inexorable lord.
The bankrupt tradeſman, by a ſeeming magic,
Opens again his merchandize to view.
I become uſeleſs, and have no employment.

LOUISA.

Not my deſerts, but your lov'd Frederick's choice,
Shows me thus worthy in your eyes. That preference,
That would make vain all womankind, ſwells out
My dwarfiſh merits, till they take a form
Of magnified importance. Propp'd by the arm
Of this affection, I feel leſs preſuming
To ſtand before ſuch holineſs.

ABBOT.

My children,
The happineſs this day preſents is fleeting;
No ſooner taſted, than ſnatch'd quick away!
I muſt reſign you—Dangers, I am told,
Lie thick in ambuſh here—you muſt depart
(Haſtening your nuptials), to ſome diſtant ſafety.

FREDERICK.

FREDERICK.

Slow is the march of conſcious innocence:
It flings not back its head to trace the cauſe
Of ſuch imagin'd dangers; nor haſtes on,
With coward eagerneſs, when real miſchief
Is clattering at its heels. This was your leſſon.—
Why ſhould we fly? Who is the wiſe adviſer?

ABBOT.

You ſaw who juſt now left me—the Lord Henry.

FREDERICK.

In this, I ſee the Counteſs' artful hand.
He is a mill, that turns but to the air
She gives to his obſequious ſails. It may
Suit both their purpoſes, that we remove
With us all obſervation of their conduct.
Let us retire within, and weigh with care
The importance of this counſel; there, to meaſure
The portion of obedience that ſhould follow.

Exeunt.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

LOUISA *and* ISABELLA.

LOUISA. (*reading a letter*)

Deteſted paper!—Learn its foul contents—
As it has mine, let horror ſeize thy ſoul!
O better had my clay been caſt in the mould
Of worſt deformity—better had Sickneſs
Mark'd me, at life's firſt dawn, the paleſt child
Of all her ghaſtly family, than to fire
Thus, in the impious breaſt of Caſimir,
The torch of fatal paſſion!

ISABELLA.

Tho' my tongue
Refus'd to utter the oppreſſive fear,
I'd ſeen too much, and dreaded every hour
The exploſion of the mine.

LOUISA.

Read, I beſeech you,
To what he dares invite me—To nought leſs
Than to a baſe, adult'rous flight with him!
For, am I not his ſon's betrothed wife?
Obſerve the cruel menaces that follow.

Here

Here let me pour my tears in Pity's boſom,
For thine is ever ſo to me!—O gentleſt,
Of friends the beſt, counſel your poor Louiſa!

ISABELLA.

Chiefly from Frederick, in the earth's deep centre,
Bury the awful ſecret. Well you know
His humour. O he'll madden at the tale!—
Adviſe with the good Abbot. Let diſcretion—

LOUISA.

At crimes like theſe, at ſuch atrocities,
Will patient Nature cautiouſly aſſume
A mien of tutor'd prudence—huſh her voice
In her own heaving boſom—give her tears,
Leſt they be notic'd, to the ruſhing torrent—
And ſeize no ſtolen hour for lamentation,
For righteous ſorrow, and for juſt complainings—
Save when in roaring winds all ſounds are buried?
Inſulted thus, thus outrag'd, muſt ſhe pace
In cold Diſcretion's circle, nor ſtart up,
Like an avenging power, to plead her cauſe
Before a fair, a ſympathiſing world,
Marſhalling millions on her ſide? Can I,
Not train'd in falſehood's arts, firſt practiſe them
On him, who is the image of all truth?

ISABELLA.

Yet, on my knees, I aſk you to ſuſpend
The horrible diſcloſure, till remov'd
Far from theſe ſcenes of guilt, leſt Frederick fall
A victim to his juſtified reſentment.

Reflect upon a father's power, and weigh the rage
That then may plunge in blood that human tiger!
Your innocent hands may themſelves forge the fetters
Of Frederick's bondage. He may be hid for ever,
The lingering ghaſtly tenant of a cell.
Nay, while, with fruitleſs tears, thou art bewailing
His ſad captivity, he may long ſince
Have found a grave beneath his priſon pavement.

LOUISA.

Such thoughts have render'd this ſtrange taſk of ſecreſy
So ſtrong a duty, that all other things
Are borne away before it. As I value
My Frederick's precious life, our general welfare,
No force, I ſwear, ſhall wreſt this horror from me.
I am prepar'd to meet the worſt of torments,
The rack of Frederick's queſtions.

ISABELLA.

Lo! my friend,
He bends his ſteps this way. Hide from his view
Theſe lines, teeming with miſchief.—Remember
What reſts upon the honeſt artifice——

Exit Iſabella.

Enter FREDERICK.

FREDERICK.

To find thee thus unchang'd in every thing,
Save in augmented charms, repays the pangs,

All

All the ſad hours of abſence. Why look back
On the long dreary vale, nor raiſe our view
Up to the ſunny proſpect now before us?
But ſure I err, or tears, with cauſtic dews,
Have on thoſe eye-lids left a coral ſtain.
Juſt as I enter'd, you peruſed a letter.

LOUISA.

I did peruſe a paper.

FREDERICK.

O! a ſcroll
Of ſlight importance!—yet, if in that boſom
It has inſinuated affliction's venom,
Can I, without impeachment of my love,
Deem it of trifling import? Perhaps, Louiſa,
Some other cauſe, and not that paper, damps
All the light joys that, when we met this morning,
Sat on thy open brow—and yet that paper
You ſeem'd to hide as I approach'd.

LOUISA. ——Yes, Frederick!
That letter *was* the cauſe—Thus far I own.
Preſs me no further now. Truſt me, hereafter
All—all ſhall be reveal'd.

FREDERICK. And why not now?
Oh! if you knew the brood of ugly ſpirits
That, while you ſpeak, are warming into life,
Are gaining ſtrength to poiſon all our bliſs;

Rather than view me craz'd, you'd cruſh them all,
Ere they were buſy at their dreadful work.

LOUISA.

I conjure you, ſpare me——

FREDERICK.

Oh, Louiſa!
Time was, when the electric ſpark of joy
Or ſorrow, at the ſame inſtant, viſited
The inmoſt cell of both our hearts, and touch'd
Each quiv'ring fibre with the ſame vibration.
We ſeem'd but one—one ſoul to animate
Our ſeparate frames; ſo that all confidence
Between us became needleſs. Do I live
To ſay theſe hours are paſt and gone? Alas!
The dreadful change! It reſts with you to tell,
What niche in all this ſtrange, much-alter'd building,
I am to fill——

LOUISA.

That of the proudeſt place;
That, where the incenſe of the tendereſt love
Shall ever ſmoke; *that*, where the lamp of truth
Shall ſhed its holieſt light—for that ſhall be
Thy proper ſtation. There ſhall be laid open
Thy poor Louiſa's breaſt—each ſeparate leaf
Of that pure volume willingly expanding
To thy ſevereſt ſearch.—Believe me, Frederick,

No

No blot will there be found—no, not a ſpeck
On its tranſparent ſurface; and know, Ungrateful,
'Tis for thy ſake, thy ſafety, I am ſilent.

FREDERICK.

For me, you may relax theſe anxious fears.
I can command my temper, tho' I meet
The man who ſuns in the more genial warmth
Of your affections.—Nay, perchance thoſe fears
Are not confin'd to me——But be at reſt:
A ſoldier's ſword will hardly try its edge
To ſpoil the features of the favour'd youth
Who may be found my rival.

LOUISA.

Oh, unjuſt!
How much you will repent, perhaps too late,
Thus ſowing noxious plants, and cankering thorns,
Where, at your will, the ſweeteſt flowers might bloom!—
I tell thee, Frederick, that thou'lt die with ſhame:
Ages of kindneſs, gentleneſs, and love,
Thou'lt think too ſhort to atone for this harſh uſage.
Have I—have I deſerv'd ſuch baſe ſuſpicions?
(*Weeps.*)

FREDERICK.

Tho' I've an Ætna here, that ſtreaming ſhower
Quenches its boiling fury. Dry thoſe tears;
Thoſe drops are large—each has ſufficient power
To waſh away poor, weak, reſiſtleſs manhood.

Oh, my Louiſa! e'en jealouſy itſelf
Has loſt its maſſive weight, and, like a ſtraw,
Rides buoyant on the boſom of that ſtream.

LOUISA.

Then is my Frederick again himſelf,
Kind, juſt, and generous.—Behold this arm,
'Tis not Herculean, yet ſhall find the ſtrength
To hold the pond'rous rudder of his ſafety.

[*Exit Louiſa.*

FREDERICK. (*ſolus*)

What can this mean! I could not ſee her weep.
How, while I gaz'd on her, did I forget
That vulture at my heart, the guilty hiding
Of that curs'd letter—Oh! ſhe hid it from me,
Or I had found the ſpring, and maſter-key
Of all theſe myſteries. —Shame on my dotage,
Thus to have ſwoln the rank liſt of thoſe,
Who, from the firſt created being down to me,
Have drawn the ſcorn of ev'ry age upon them,
Gull'd by a few ſalt tears, and ſilly prayers!

Enter ADOLPHUS.

ADOLPHUS.

My friend, well found! I eagerly have ſought you.
You've ſeen our good Lord Abbot?

FREDERICK.

Not long ſince,
Has he departed hence——

ADOLPHUS.

ADOLPHUS.

Then, prithee, tell me,
Has he not ſtrongly urg'd your quick departure?

FREDERICK.

He has——

ADOLPHUS.

No longer you reſiſt his counſels?

FREDERICK.

Why not reſiſt them?—he aſſign'd no motive.
Beſides, Lord Henry was his oracle.
Perhaps, with you he has been more explicit:
Bleſt in his confidence, you, perhaps, make one
Of that grave parliament, which has pronounc'd
The ſentence of my baniſhment.

ADOLPHUS.

Thy happineſs,
Nay, life itſelf, depends on thy obedience.

FREDERICK.

So, ſo—I'm glad to find my friend Adolphus
Thus well inſtructed.—Now, let's learn the cauſe.

ADOLPHUS.

I know it not——

FREDERICK.

What! ignorant, and yet
So eager for this flight! a ſtep not quite
Indifferent—to ſhun a father's preſence—
To forfeit all fair title to the canopy
Of this paternal roof, and uſe the wings

That

That thoſe would uſe who do ſome ſhameful act;
And when I'm aſk'd, what dangers I am ſhunning,
To ſay, another told me there was peril—
You are not wont to trifle with your friend?

ADOLPHUS.

This inſtant I have left my Iſabella;
And, had you witneſs'd her diſtracted ſoul,
With fears for you, and for Louiſa, you'd deem'd
No trivial cauſe had work'd the deep diſtreſs.

FREDERICK.

Aſide. Then, here is another added to the roll
Of tame and credulous good ſouls, who, if
Made but for little uſe, ſtill are the ſtuff
From which the beſt of huſbands are cut out.—
Adolphus, you have known me from my youth;
What haſt thou ſeen in me, to make thee think
That, happily not yet depriv'd of viſion,
I ſhould commit my footſteps to the care
Of ſome ſagacious dog to lead me ſafe,
Rather than truſt my own obſervances?
Or, hearing with the ſenſe of common men,
I ſhould, for the perception of all ſound,
Depend upon my neighbour's organs?—For
What is it you propoſe, but that I ſeal
A reſignation of my faculties,
And put my mind and limbs in tutelage,
Following as others beckon?

ADOLPHUS.

ADOLPHUS.

Pray Heaven,
The apprehenſions of your friends prove groundleſs!
Foreboding thoughts, which I would only own
To thee, becauſe you know I'm not a coward,
Haunt me where'er I turn. The air I draw
Sits a perpetual night-mare on my breaſt.
I hate the place, and ſtop, with ſhameful pauſe,
Whene'er I lift the arras of the doors,
Leſt one ſhould there be hid with murd'rous purpoſe.
Till now, I never entertain'd ſuch fancies.

FREDERICK.

Peres will tell thee, that thy body's ſick;
He'll exorciſe theſe demons with a drug.
And now adieu—Let Peres quick be ſent for.
Thou art not well. [*Exit Adolphus.*

As FREDERICK *is going out at the oppoſite door, he meets the* FATAL SISTER.

SISTER.

O ſtop, Lord Frederick—
Wherefore this haſte?

FREDERICK.

The queſtion, and the arreſt,
Beſpeak a right, a ſtranger, as thou art
To me, may find not eaſy to maintain.
I would paſs on——

SISTER.

I'll charm thee with a word,
And fix thee like a ſtatue to this place.
Know, thy admoniſh'd flight is ignominy.
You are much abus'd—Truſt not the treach'rous ſhell,
But pierce into the kernel, where you'll find
An eating maggot, preying on the food
That ought to be thy nouriſhment of life.

FREDERICK.

What can'ſt thou be, that ſeem'ſt to know ſo much,
And yet, like all the reſt, add to the fever
Of my diſtracted brain?

SISTER.

Enquire no further.
The hour's not yet arriv'd for explanation.
Follow me not; we ſoon may meet again.
Purſue me not a ſtep—Th' attempt to gain
The knowledge of the place I here may occupy,
Will blaſt my power hereafter to aſſiſt you.

[*Exit Siſter.*

FREDERICK.

Amazement chills my ſoul!—Why am I thus
The ſport of all, ſtrangers as well as others?
I will be fool'd no longer—this myſtery
Muſt, from its hiding-place, be pluck'd by force,
For it has yielded to no ſoft perſuaſion.
'Tis true, I'm much abus'd. I'll to the Counteſs.
As all fair dealing has deſerted thoſe I

Who formerly abhorr'd dark, crooked ways,
Perhaps, for change, it takes up its abode
With our dear Step-mother.—They'll drive me
mad!

SCENE II.

The COUNTESS's Apartment.

COUNTESS. (*alone*)

Now, by my wrongs, ſince ſqueamiſh Henry's arm
Is ague-ſtruck and palſied, trembling ſhrinks
From wonted enterprize and noble daring,
Be it for me, to ſhow I can diſpenſe
With ſuch white-liver'd agents.—This dark juice,
(*Showing a phial*)
Theſe deadly drops, in failure of the projects
That now are ſwarming in the ſteaming hive
Of my conceiving brain, muſt be my laſt,
Infallible, reſource.—But try we firſt,
Whether, poſſeſs'd of theſe important ſecrets,
We may not, by contrivance and ſafe means,
Tempt him, without my aid, to ſeek the cave,
The ſilent cave, of everlaſting ſleep.

Enter LOUISA.

LOUISA.

I am inform'd, that you requir'd my preſence.

COUNTESS.

'Tis true, Louiſa: I would ſpeak with you.—
Ah!

Aſide. Ah! how ſhe ſtands before me, pure and innocent,
Unconſcious of the ills that hover o'er her,
As little children at their play.—Ah! would
That this poor lamb was driven far aſide,
And ſet apart from ſlaughter—from the ruin
That muſt indeed ſpread wide t' enſure my ſafety.

LOUISA.

I wait your pleaſure.—Sure ſhe hears me not.

COUNTESS

Aſide. Ye powers! how comes it, that ſuch gentleneſs
Holds o'er the world a more commanding ſceptre
Than I can hope to graſp, altho' inſtall'd
By hell itſelf in worldly power.—There's ſomething
In the free rolling eye of virtue, that
Arreſts the furtive glance of guilt, and chains it
To the ground—I hardly dare look up to her—

LOUISA.

Alas! what means this humour!—Ne'er before
I view'd her thus.

COUNTESS.

Excuſe me, dear Louiſa,
I was abſorb'd in thought—a heavy grief
Makes me thus abſent, and diſtracts my mind.
My ſorrow is for you.

LOUISA.

LOUISA.

For me! what cauſe,
I do entreat you, raiſes this emotion?

COUNTESS.

Go! you're a poor diſſembler,—This ſad morning,
That ſhould have danc'd upon its feet of down,
Hailing the hymeneal torch that leads it;
That from thoſe chambers ſhould have ſtol'n the gloom,
And made a pauſe, a ſort of holiday,
In this moſt diſmal ſameneſs; lour'd and frown'd
When moſt it ſhould have ſmil'd.—Come, come, I know
What ſtrings are at thy heart.—Start not, but liſten.

LOUISA.

And how have I betray'd an anxious ſoul!—

COUNTESS.

I'll ſave you all the pain of a confeſſion—
I am no ſtranger to my huſband's paſſion:
Long us'd to his hard treatment, as to the range
He gives to his unbridl'd luſts, I grieve
That his inceſtuous eyes are fix'd on thee.

LOUISA.

O horror! O diſguſt!

COUNTESS.

I echo back
Thoſe ſounds: thy virtuous hate, and natural loathing,

Secure

Secure in me a friend.—My care ſhall be
To ſhelter thy ſad head from this foul ſtorm,
From all the rage of diſappointed paſſion;
Tho' I ſhould be a victim to its fury.

LOUISA.

What can I ſay?—How thank you?—By what words
Expreſs my grateful feeling?

(Kneels to the Counteſs.)

COUNTESS.

Riſe, Louiſa;
I am o'erpaid.—The mode, by which we may
Elude the preſent danger, has not ta'en
Its perfect ſhape.—You know the ſhaded walk
That leads to the pavillion; in an hour
You'll find me there; there will we plan together
Thine and thy deareſt Frederick's preſervation.
Till then, reſume your wonted chearfulneſs;
And mark my words, dear child, all ſhall be well.
Be punctual to the time.—No thanks—farewell.

[Exit Louiſa.

If thou art punctual to the time, ſo ſhall
Another be; not I, but your new lover.
There, too, muſt Frederick be found.—Moſt ſtrange,
If ſuch a meeting end not to our wiſh!
Firſt, how to draw Lord Caſimir to the ſpot—
Giving him hope, will lead him to the ſnare;
For will not driv'ling age ſend out its ſparks

Like

Like youth itſelf, if ſtruck upon by hope—
Making itſelf a pointed mockery!
By what ſlight cauſes, are the great events
Of this ſtrange planet govern'd!—By four lines
Of artful imitation, muſt this hand
Form a dire ſpell, that, from the realms of death,
Shall call the murd'rous fiends t' aſſemble near me!
Then give me, ſacred Vengeance, to aſſume
The noble ſemblance of the ruling fury,
To teach them where to ſtrike, and how to lay
My hard oppreſſor lifeleſs at my feet!

[*Exit Counteſs.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.

An Apartment of the Caſtle.

COUNTESS *and* FREDERICK.

COUNTESS.

Frederick, I hail the hour that, by your preſence,
And glad arrival, promiſes a change,
A ſoftening of condition, to the wretched
Whom theſe ſad walls impriſon.

FREDERICK.

Has there, then,
During our abſence, been no change worth notice?
Have all things, then, obey'd their former laws,
And in the ſame mark'd circles roll'd? No loops
Of deviation? What, no lively flights,
Merely to vary the old tedious paths,
And make the blood flow quicker?—As Conſtancy
Seems to have quarrell'd with its old ally,
Pure Love, and their ill-ſorted league's diſſolv'd,
No wonder, then, that ſhe has turn'd to Dulneſs,
And here they reign together——

COUNTESS.

COUNTESS.

Aside. Ah!—Thoſe words
Should be explain'd! ſomething, I ſee, has touch'd
A chord, that muſt be ſtruck on to th' utterance
Of a much louder ſound.—
What change, I pray you,
Was to be look'd for here?—Time has not added
Wings to his limping gait. The ſullen bell
Swings out its mandates, both for prayer and food,
As it has done for ages.—All the night,
The ſame intemp'rate orgies tear the hall,
And, to my grief, menace your honour'd father
With premature abridgement of his days.

FREDERICK.

But, for your wards—have they ſat moping too?
Weeping their abſent mates? No mirth to cheer them?
No company of youth, as does befit them?—
'Tis well we are return'd!

COUNTESS.

You know, Louiſa
In kindred is as rich as in poſſeſſions.
Such viſit at their will—ſome ſtrangers, too,
Young officers of the adjoining garriſon,
Would, in their pity, ſometime come, to checquer
Our heavy hours with partial rays of gaiety.

FREDERICK.

Do I know any of theſe viſitors?

COUNTESS.

The greater number—and, among the many,
The young Prince Staniſlaus.

FREDERICK.

What, he who did
Such able ſervice at the ſiege of Bender,
In the laſt year's campaign?

COUNTESS.

The ſame.

FREDERICK.

In form,
And in accompliſhments, we might ſearch far,
Before we found his equal.—Came he often?
Oftener, perhaps, than others!

COUNTESS.

Aſide. { Oh! 'tis there,
The pois'nous ſeed lies hid!—It ſhall be ripen'd—
Now, I begin to tread a ſmoother road.——
Under this roof, all found a conſtant welcome;
Our living more adapted to the ways
Of ſome than others.

FREDERICK.

And this beauty man!—
I mean him no diſparagement—I know
He's brave, and courteous, highly ſkill'd in arms.

From

From livelineſs of temper, wit, and frolic,
He muſt have ſuited Iſabella's fancy.
Adolphus, dreams not of his near eſcape;
For that young ſoldier has a 'witching tongue.

COUNTESS.

This might have been his former diſpoſition;
But, for *her* wildneſs, he was much too ſad.
He ſeem'd to affect a melancholy air,
Books of a ſerious turn, grave reaſonings;
Scattering before our little tender fawns
Such food of ſcience, as, when I was young,
I had not ſtoop'd to browſe on.

FREDERICK.

Both, I ween,
Were the attentive pupils of this ſage?

COUNTESS.

I ſay not ſo of Iſabella——

FREDERICK.

O torture!—
And did theſe lectures frequently prevail,
You, Madam, always preſent?

COUNTESS.

Could that be?
Could I purſue them o'er the mountain's ridge,
To ſeek for ſome rare foſſil? or could I
Paſs evenings in the foreſt, to detect
Some plant of curious growth.—But you ſeem mov'd:

You ſurely don't ſuſpect Louiſa's truth?
Living for you, what matters it with whom,
Or where, ſhe ran?—Have you not, long ſince, gain'd
The empire of her heart? I'm confident,
You've yet no ground for jealouſy. Cauſeleſs
Suſpicion will call up, in woman's breaſt,
A hate too exquiſite for man's conception.—
I do entreat you, if you find that canker
Has, with its ſharp, corroding tooth, begun
To prey upon thy heart, quickly tear out
The morbid portion, and, O! caſt it from thee.
Rather, call down from th' air the famiſh'd kites,
And bid them battle for the carrion banquet,
Than ſuffer it to rot within thy boſom.

FREDERICK.

O rack me not with doubts!—Thoſe words you utter'd
Have, from the viper's gum, pluck'd out its bag,
And ſqueez'd it on my brain.

COUNTESS.

Yet ſtill be patient.
Indeed, I think Louiſa may be true.
Some things I have not lik'd—but, theſe were trifles.
I found them both in tears. But, tears might flow
From a ſad tale, read in ſome doleful volume.

FREDERICK.

O no!—I ſee it all—all is diſcover'd,
Clear as the light. My friends ſuſpect her failings,

But

But dare not think ſhe is thus plung'd in guilt;
So tempt me to bear off the glorious prize,
Ere one ſhould come, with a ſuperior claim,
And raviſh it away.—The Innocent,
That has been ſcorch'd by an illicit fire,
E'en in its progreſs up the altar's ſteps!
Who, when ſhe yields her to the nuptial-bed,
In her rank mind, is by another claſp'd;
And who, perhaps, haſtens herſelf theſe rites,
To hide the babe, now moving in her womb,
In a wife's holy mantle.

COUNTESS.

I may err:—
But from the love I bear you, and, what's more,
From ſtronger ties of duty to your father,
Could I, with patience, view the ſon deceiv'd?
Would you be ſatisfied?

FREDERICK.

Be ſatisfied!—
I would, indeed, nay, muſt be ſatisfied.

COUNTESS.

Then be attentive, and obſerve this mode—
If they hold meetings, this muſt be the practice.
You know the walk that leads to the pavilion.
I've marvell'd wherefore, at a certain hour,
In ſpite of drizzling rains, and boiſt'rous winds,
Louiſa ever does frequent that ſpot.
The hour's at hand; and I would pledge my life,

That, you will there, at leaſt, exchange ſuſpenſe
For certainty.—You will not go unarm'd,
O promiſe me, you will not go unarm'd.—
Whate'er you may conceive of that young ſoldier's
Virtue, and bright honour, a rival's ſword,
At ſuch intruſion, would not long repoſe
Within a peaceful ſcabbard.—Now, farewel.
[*Exit Counteſs.*

FREDERICK *flings himſelf into a chair, in extreme agitation.*

Enter ABBOT.

ABBOT.

Good heavens, what means this agony of ſoul!
Speak to me, Frederick; I may have the power
To exorciſe the demons, who've the means,
By their contrivances, and helliſh tricks,
To caſt down all our edifice of joy.
I'm come to take my leave—for ſtill, your friends
Inſiſt upon your flight with your Louiſa.

FREDERICK.

I heard you but imperfectly—*my* Louiſa!—
What's mine to-day, to-morrow is another's;
And, by the quicker ſhifting of the coin
From palm to palm, the learned writers ſay,
The ſtate becomes more flouriſhing. Something
You ſaid of flight. *I* have much buſineſs here—

ABBOT.

This talk is naught.—Thoſe friends, whom you
deſpiſe,
All dread ſome coming ill; their cares, their
kindneſs——

FREDERICK.

There is a moſt ſtrange cozenage in ſuch kindneſs;
I'm tired of their emollient cares. We've heard,
That, unctuous liquor, on the ocean caſt,
Will ſtill the waves that curl their heads to heaven.
But, ſhould a ſlabbering ideot pour the ſame
Upon a raging fire, you'd grant, good father,
That were a mighty error. Know, the oil,
Which theſe officious friends ſo kindly bring,
They ſprinkle on a furnace. Feel this pulſe;
Does it not beat as it would wake the dead?
And yet I am not ſick, unleſs the quackery
Of thoſe, who ſay they love me, make me ſo.

ABBOT.

Theſe are the firſt harſh words I ever heard
Diſgrace thoſe gentle lips.

FREDERICK.

Harſh words to you!
You ſurely muſt miſtake. What have I ſaid?
Next to the God, whoſe eſſence I adore,
And to whoſe judging bar, quick as the march
Of morning light, I, wretch, may be convey'd;
Next to the worſhip at his ſacred altars;—
Oh!

Oh! I have ever deem'd it not impiety
Thus, thus to kneel to thee.

ABBOT.

Ariſe, my ſon.
How can I ſoothe the tempeſt of thy mind?

FREDERICK.

If we e're meet again——

ABBOT.

If meet again!

FREDERICK.

I know I ſhall not ſink in thy eſteem;
And, if condemn'd a fugitive to roam
Far, far from hence, O judge me not with rigour!
For, I have crying wrongs—Of theſe no more.—
Or, ſhould I be embrac'd by death's cold hand,
And if there be an interpoſing ſpace
Between the reſignation of the breath
And being call'd before the Almighty's throne,
Sure, I ſhould feel thy cenſure in the tomb;
Whereas, from thy pure ſentence of acquittal,
I might foretaſte the anticipated bliſs
Of Heaven's approving mercy.——Hark! that ſound—

(*The caſtle clock ſtrikes.*)

That bell is myſtical!—O ſay, is life,
Or death, employ'd in rolling on that ſound!

(*Wildly.*)

I'm

I'm warned hence—farewel!—with this dear,
dear embrace,
Oh, moſt rever'd of men, farewel! farewel!
[*Exit Frederick.*

ABBOT.

Great God! reſtore his ſenſe. Ye heavenly ſpirits,
Direct his frantic ſteps!

Enter ADOLPHUS.

Now, whence come you?
Met you not our Frederick?

ADOLPHUS.

Either himſelf,
Or fleeting ſhadow, for it paſs'd ſo quickly,
Shun'd me, as I croſs'd the adjoining hall.
Does he retain his obſtinate intent
Of braving here the dangers that are menac'd?

ABBOT.

The laſt night's tempeſt was a zephyrous gale,
To the rough ſtorm that tears his frame to atoms:
Rage in his glowing eyes, and on his lips
A babel of ſtrange words, which always rung
Of inſults, wrongs, and griefs.—Then, at the
ſounding
Of the ſixth hour, he ſprang from me away;
But temper'd, ſuddenly, his laſt adieu,
With ſuch ſweet milk of kindneſs, as unmans
me, (*weeps*)
Yet nouriſhes the hope, that the proud ſtructure

Of his exalted mind is not for ever
Ruin'd.—Adolphus, quick purſue your friend;
He ill will brook obſervance—but be near,
To ſhield his unprotected head from danger;
But moſt, too horrid thought! prevent an act
Of fatal rage!—O guard him from himſelf!

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

COUNT CASIMIR. LORD HENRY.

CASIMIR. (*with a letter.*)

Prithee, peruſe this paper.—How like you
The contents?—

HENRY.

Amazement!—It cannot be!—
Tho' like Louiſa's hand. I've ſeen twin infants,
Aſunder, almoſt cheat the parent's eye;
But, when together, ſhow, with glaring marks,
How much they differ.—Nay, a ſingle word,
Trac'd by her pen, would prove the counterfeit.

CASIMIR.

You ſeem incredulous.

HENRY.

In truth, I am ſo;
To find ſuch innocence, and modeſty,
Melt, on a ſudden, like a ſhrinking ſnow

Upon

Upon a ſouthern bank, and turn her cheek,
With the lewd ſun-flower, to the firſt hot ray
That ruſhes forth to meet it.

CASIMIR.

The miracle,
To view a woman won by flattery!
What think you of the proffer'd aſſignation?
Is not the place of meeting nam'd? the ſpot
A private one?—Say, do I dream all this?

HENRY.

Regard it ſtill a trick of ſome ſworn foe,
Some foul aſſaſſin's ſcheme.—You have eſcap'd
More than one murd'rous project 'gainſt your life.
O be upon your guard!

CASIMIR.

Your friendly prudence
Might much avail with thoſe you're us'd to herd with,
Important ſeigniors of an anti-chamber,
Whoſe ſouls of enterprize have ne'er been found,
But in the glorious conteſt for a door-way,
Whoſe ſhoulder ſhould be firſt advanc'd.—Talk not
To me——

HENRY.

Can you believe, the young Louiſa
Turns from your ſon to you?

CASIMIR.

I caution you
To ſilence—I'm not us'd to be thus tutor'd.

HENRY.

Muſt I, then, ſee you ruſh on certain ruin,
And not endeavour to impede your courſe?

CASIMIR.

Impede my courſe! Move but a limb, that motion
Will coſt thee dear.—Endeavour to prevent
My fix'd deſigns, or but divulge the ſecret,
With which thou art entruſted, and, by Heaven,
Some dungeon-door ſhall cloſe on thee for ever!
Centuries ſhall paſs away, before th' expoſure
Of thy uncoffin'd bones ſhall mark the hole
Where, and in what agonizing poſture,
Thou met thy wretched fate.—Remember, Sir,
That I am maſter here. [*Exit Caſimir.*

HENRY.

What's life to me?
Vain are ſuch threats!—The hell I ſuffer now,
Defies hereafter all increaſe of torment.
If I provoke my end, let my laſt act
O God!—my firſt!—be ſuch, as pitying angels
May dare to look on. Haſte we, then, to ſnatch
This virtuous, injur'd pair, from their deſtruction;
Expoſe this ſenſual Tyrant's black intent,
And quickly circumvent a ſubtler fiend,
Whoſe curſed foot-ſteps I begin to follow
In this myſterious ſand. [*Exit Henry.*

SCENE

SCENE III.

A Walk in a Grove.

LOUISA.

The evening's cold, and dreary: the dull clouds
Cling to the mountain's ſide. The baffled ſun
Calls in his beams, and hies him to the weſt;
No longer ſtruggling with the thick'ning vapour.
How many of this world muſt never view
His riſe again!—Alas! methinks, theſe oaks
Spread a ſepulchral ſhade—I never lik'd
The ſpot. The ſilly ſervants of the caſtle
Ever avoid it; for, they ſay, they walk
On drops of blood, which neither ſnows nor rains
Can e'er efface.—Indeed, 'tis ſtrange the Counteſs
Could find no private chamber in that edifice,
More fit for conference! But I've obey'd——

Enter CASIMIR, *wearing his cloak as a diſguiſe.*

LOUISA.

Eternal powers! What's this?—A man diſguis'd!
(*Caſimir diſcovering himſelf*)
Lord Caſimir!—Quick, tell me, where's the Counteſs?

CASIMIR.

'Tis not her cuſtom, thus to riſk her health,
Amidſt

Amidſt ſuch riſing dews. You could not hope
To meet her here.

LOUISA.

Whom came I here to meet?

CASIMIR.

One, in whoſe boſom thoſe tranſcendant charms
Have lit a torch of everlaſting love;
Who, in the loweſt cavern of deſpair,
Found in that darkneſs, by thy lovely aid,
How to bind on the crimſon wings of hope.

LOUISA.

My Lord, I comprehend you not—My aid!

CASIMIR. *(ſhowing the letter)*

Does not the extatic bliſs, herein contain'd,
Spring from thy magic touch?—This letter wills
That I attend you here. By this inform'd,
I come not to be chid for owning, that
I love; how long, how truly, I've ador'd:
Rather to watch compaſſion's milky ſtream
Burſt from its ſource, and hear that angel voice
Confirm the pardon of the raſh avowal.
For what can we demand of ſaints in heaven,
But firſt to liſten, then beſtow their pity?

LOUISA.

If I have liſten'd, without calling down
The execration of the world upon thee;
If I have liſten'd, and not fiercely rouſed,

In

In my juſt cauſe, the rage of all my kindred;
And, if I've been thus patient, 'midſt my wrongs;
Know, 'twas for Frederick's ſake, I wore the maſk
Of honeſt ſimulation, boldly riſk'd
All that I now endure, ſooner than drive
Him craz'd about the earth, and hold the knife,
That cuts, at once, all bands of filial piety,
Which, ſever'd thus, no art can ever twiſt
Again in union.

CASIMIR.

Have I not cleareſt proof,
Moſt damning proof, of a much ſofter temper,
Of gentler thoughts?—You cannot, ſure, deny
This writing——

LOUISA.

O I do! and ſwear, by him
Who is all truth, that you are much abus'd.
O ſave your ſon—yourſelf—from endleſs miſery,
And ſuffer me to quit theſe ſcenes for ever!

(*Offering to go, is prevented by Caſimir.*)

CASIMIR.

'Tis like you all—from fancy, ſport, caprice,
Pure love of change, mere curioſity,
There is no peril that you will not face;
Attempt the ſkies, or dive into th' abyſs
Which fathom has not ſounded; ever truſting,
That falſehood will be ready at your call,
And free you from the jeopardy.—You have
Allow'd me hope; what's more, have met me here:

The appointment yours. I'll not be trifled with,
Nor mov'd by your denial—not hell itſelf
Shall ſcare me from my purpoſe!

LOUISA.

Ah!—what purpoſe?

CASIMIR.

You know the houſe in the foreſt—and 'tis there
That I expect, you will not long retain
This peeviſh mood, but ſoon again incline
To former gentleneſs.—The carriages
Are cloſe at hand; theſe will convey you quickly—

LOUISA.

What, to depart with you!—fly from your ſon!
My life! my huſband!—If ever, when an infant,
Claſp'd in thy arms, with his dear, cherub tongue,
He forced, into thy vanquiſh'd eyes, the dew,
The honied dew of tenderneſs; if, ſince,
Thy pride, a father's honeſt pride's been glutted
By his bright deeds; thy renovated glory
Beaming anew beneath my Frederick's laurels;
O ſpare him!—ſpare us both!

CASIMIR.

Nay, then, we muſt
Reſort to force—reſiſtance all is vain.

(*Endeavouring to draw her towards the bottom of the ſtage.*)

LOUISA.

Sweet Heaven! if innocence was ever ſhielded—
Is no one near at hand?

FRE-

FREDERICK *enters, diſguiſed in his cloak—*CASIMIR *immediately runs at him with his ſword.*

CASIMIR.

Whoe'er thou art,
Take *this*, accurs'd intruder!—

(*Frederick draws to defend himſelf, and Caſimir inſtantly falls.—Louiſa has ſunk on the ground with terror.*)

FREDERICK.

O Louiſa!
Whate'er have been thy failings, can I bear
To ſee thee thus—then ſpeak, and tell me quick,
What I have done. A valuable man,
Perhaps, has fallen by my hand, one who,
By your approval of his love, may have
Excuſe for this mad act.—Is it young Staniſlaus?
I am ſorry for his fate; and, tho' my rival,
He merited a better.

LOUISA. (*after a long effort*)

Oh! no, no!

FREDERICK.

Who, then, could ruſh thus frantic on my ſword?

LOUISA.

The miſerable deed!—It was thy father—
And there he lies, depriv'd of life by thee!

FREDERICK.

Merciful God!—then here I ſtand, before thee
A murd'rer, and a parricide!

LOUISA.

The fault was mine——
Was mine! and all this misery has follow'd
From my erroneous silence.—But, my Frederick,
Thou, too, art bleeding!

FREDERICK.

True—at first, I thought
The hurt was slight—but I begin to feel
It may be such as will remove from th' earth
A wretch, the foul destroyer of his father!
Look on that lifeless corse:—after that work,
That work of blood, could even *you*, Louisa,
Wish me to drag on life?—(*Sinks with faintness.*)

LOUISA.

O horror!—O despair!

Enter ABBOT, ISABELLA, ADOLPHUS, HENRY, *Servants.*

ABBOT.

Cries of distress,
And Frederick wounded!

ADOLPHUS.

And the father slain!

FREDERICK.

That deed was mine!—If I had strength, I'd show
I am not quite so guilty as I seem.
Had I but known him, I'd not rais'd my arm
E'en in my own defence.——(*Sinks again, supported by Louisa and Isabella.*

HENRY.

HENRY.

(Picking up the letter which Caſimir has let fall.)

This may explain.
O here ſhe reigns confeſs'd!—The ſorcereſs—
How dext'rous was this ſubtle ſcheme of blood!
How, from her hateful entrails, has ſhe ſpun
This glewy web!—What victim could elude her!
Then, tho' I ſtand a ſelf-accuſed felon,
In ſight of all mankind, ſhe ſha'n't eſcape,
If Poland has a law for crimes like theſe.
O Fred'rick!—O dear, unhappy youth!
And could ſhe find no other hand but thine,
To miniſter to ſuch atrocious guilt?—
But here ſhe comes.

Enter COUNTESS.

FREDERICK.

The dark, infernal ſcheme,
Requires no comment—all is now unravell'd,
Pray, let her not approach me—and prevent her
From pois'ning the few moments I've to live,
By tempting me to curſe her.—Thoſe few moments
Should all be thine, Louiſa.

COUNTESS.

O cruel ſight!
What's here?—our Fred'rick fall'n!—my huſband ſlain!
Ah me! who's done all this?

HENRY

HENRY.

And doſt thou aſk?
Doſt thou enquire who dy'd this ground with blood?
Know, 'twas thyſelf—and Poland too ſhall know
The female wolf, that ravag'd all this land.
I am prepar'd, to hold up to its view,
A tiſſue of ſuch crimes, as ſcarce have names
In the black chronicle of hell!

COUNTESS.

Thou art——

HENRY.

I am, inhuman woman!—tho' I ſee
That we muſt fall together.

COUNTESS.

Abject ſlave!
Thou worſt of villains! white-lip'd, daſtard villain!
But ſtill I'll triumph o'er thee—meet my fate
With ſuch a ſoul, thou can'ſt not imitate.
Oh! it will ſoothe my dying hour, to watch
Thee, ſtanding pale and trembling on the ſcaffold,
Shrink from the wheel, and howl before the torture,
Of this you can't deprive me.—Give me way.

[*Ruſhes out.*

ABBOT.

Purſue, and guard her in the caſtle towers,
Until a ſtronger priſon ſhall receive her.

LOUISA.

You do not look ſo ghaſtly as you did—

Perhaps your pains are leſs. Shall we attempt
To bear you from this ſpot?

FREDERICK.

No, dear Louiſa,
I'm paſt ſuch care—That pang was terrible!
It was the gripe of Death; his icy fingers
Are buſy at my heart.—Come near, good Abbot—
O comfort this poor mourner, and convince her,
I ſhould have liv'd the horror of the world—
'Tis better as it is.—Thy aid, Louiſa,
A minute more, and I ſhall be at reſt.
Farewel! farewel!—(*Dies.*)

LOUISA.

O agonizing words!—

ISABELLA.

Angels of mercy, he is gone for ever!

ABBOT.

A purer ſpirit never wing'd its flight
To heaven's bleſt manſions. How ſhall we divide
The living from the dead? Uſe gentle means—

ISABELLA.

Her hand is clench'd in his; and, of the two,
Her's has the deadlieſt coldneſs—all her ſenſe
Seems failing. Before return of reaſon,
Let us entice her from this fatal ſpot.

(Louiſa appears recovering, and ſuffers herſelf to be raiſed without ſpeaking, but looking wildly.)

ISABELLA.

ISABELLA.

This way, deareſt friend.

LOUISA.

Ah! that way, I know,
Leads to his chamber—This glad morn I fill'd it
With ſweeteſt flowers—He'll gueſs who gather'd them.
But have there not been combats, wounds, and deaths?
And yet you all ſeem well—Then where is Frederick?—

(*She breaks from them, and runs to Frederick.*)

There, there he is! I hold him in my arms!
He has been hurt, and you've conceal'd it from me;
But preſently he'll ſpeak to me—indeed,
Indeed, he will; and we ſhall both be happy.

Flings herſelf on Frederick's body, and the Curtain falls.

4 AP 54

FINIS.

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EPILOGUE.

BEFORE their trial at your awful bar,
Our ſaucy Bards appear to tread on air;
Puff'd up with pride, and mad with diſtant fame,
No voice can ſtop them, and no counſel tame.
While in their breaſts delicious fancies glow,
For them the earth's too ſmall, the ſky's too low;
Viſions of laurel crowns, before their ſight,
Fleet in ſucceſſion, till the fatal night;
The fatal night, when all their courage flies,
And hope itſelf with the firſt muſic dies.
Soon, all the flimſy ſtructure of their bliſs
Shakes at a yawn, but's levell'd by a hiſs.
At laſt, *Off Off* decides their final doom,
And, from the rack, conveys them to the tomb.
But yet before they ſink in endleſs night,
On our bad acting vent their furious ſpite;
Swear we're the cauſe and authors of their ſhame,
Leagu'd with the town to join in envious blame.
Loſt in amaze, perplex'd with dire diſmay,
They know not how to fly, or how to ſtay.
Till from the green-room ruſhing to the ſtreet,
They kick the firſt poor link-boy that they meet.
So, from the city, ſtarts ſome daſhing ſpark,
Eyes his new chariot, and cries out "Hyde Park;"
From the ſmall window pokes his jewiſh noſe,
And thinks he charms the public as he goes;
Till ſome rude dray-man nips him in the bud,
And rolls the whiſker'd coxcomb in the mud.
Who, curſing thoſe that ſnatch him from the wreck,
Swears they're alike combin'd to break his neck.

Should you to-night our Poet but endure,
You'll fix his frenzy, and beyond all cure.
Lord! how he'll vapour, and how domineer!
How little in his eyes ſhall *we* appear!

God

EPILOGUE.

God knows but he'll attempt, in desperate rage,
To amend the taste, and fashion of the age,
And, grown quite wild, blaspheme the German stage!
Scout all the rules which teach us how to move,
To walk, to stand, to wear a hat, or glove;
How, for each crime that Nature stains, prepare
To draw from Pity's eye the holy tear;
How, for the charming villain make you feel,
How to wear one shoe up, one down at heel.
Then bid us break these foreign chains, and dare
Fix for ourselves a table or a chair.

This you'll confess is folly in the extreme;
O do not then improve his dangerous dream;
But, damning him, decree it be his fate,
Twelve plays a-year from Kotzebue to translate.